

## Kentucky Virtual University Student and Course Definitions

Action: The staff recommends that the council approve a new definition of a "Kentucky Virtual University student" and a "KYVU course," as described below.

At its February 6, 2002, meeting, the Distance Learning Advisory Committee (DLAC) asked the KYVU and the council to form a task force to draft a revised definition of a "KYVU student" and a "KYVU course." Sherri Noxel, council Senior Associate for Information, and Gene Ranvier, KYVU Chief Student Services Officer, led the task force, which included representatives from Northern Kentucky University, the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, the Governmental Services Center, and the Department for Adult Education and Literacy. DLAC approved August 26, 2002, the following task force recommendations, for which the council staff seeks council approval.

1. The term "learner" will replace "student" because many users of the KYVU's services are not enrolled at an academic institution (examples include learners at the Department for Adult Education and Literacy's KyVAE.org and at the Education Professional Standards Board's KyEducators.org). The term "student" suggests enrollment for academic credit within a traditional academic semester. "Learner" is a broader term that implies anywhere, anytime work to improve skills and enhance knowledge whether or not an academic credential is associated with the work.

2. To be counted as a KYVU learner, an individual must meet any one of the following three criteria: (a) he or she is enrolled in a course, module, or other program housed on a course management platform or other software licensed by the KYVU; (b) he or she registers through the KYVU for a course, module, or other program, regardless of where it is housed electronically; or (c) he or she uses in a material and countable way other KYVU services, such as advising, tutoring, or the call center.

The KYVU's current technology does not allow for disaggregation of the kinds of learners using advising, tutoring, and call center services, so the criterion in (c) cannot now be implemented. The KYVU wishes to create the criterion for a time when technology allows implementation.

Learner statistics for the KYVU will be kept on the basis of unduplicated headcount. All KYVU learners also will be counted by and at their respective institutions and state agencies. A learner who meets two or three criteria would only be counted at the KYVU once.

3. The courses housed on a course management platform licensed by the KYVU and the courses for which a learner must register through the KYVU are, by definition, KYVU courses. Therefore, a KYVU course can only consist of KYVU learners as defined in 2. above. Students who do not meet the definition of "KYVU learner" in 2. above cannot be included in a KYVU course.

The KYVU's goal is to be as conservative as possible in counting the KYVU's learners, and to identify most accurately the usage of KYVU resources. For example, since present technology does not allow for disaggregation of learners who use the call center, the risk of double counting will be avoided by not counting any callers to the center in the KYVU's learner statistics. Likewise, the proposed new definition will initially reduce the number of KYVU learners because universities and colleges today designate as a "KYVU student" learners who will not meet any of the three criteria proposed above. The KYVU estimates the impact on the KYVU's count of learners from universities and colleges to be (all figures are unduplicated headcount):

Spring 2001 under existing definition: 3,210 learners

Spring 2001 under new definition: 2,380 learners

Spring 2002 under existing definition: 6,281 learners

Spring 2002 under new definition: 5,341 learners

Please note that these figures refer only to learners in credit-bearing courses from the colleges and universities. The KYVU also serves learners who are not seeking academic credit: learners in certificate and other workplace training modules from various providers, learners via KyVAE.org (adult education), and learners via KyEducators.org (K-12 teachers). All the non-credit learners already meet at least one of the proposed three criteria. The non-credit category was 148 learners for spring 2001, and 1,365 for spring 2002. Thus, combining the number of learners under the new definition in credit-bearing activities with the number of learners under the new definition in non-credit activities, the KYVU calculates its total spring 2001 headcount as 2,528, and its total spring 2002 headcount as 6,706.

Most important, the learner count reported by the KYVU must match the total of the count reported by the council's comprehensive database for learners taking courses offered by the academic institutions and the counts of the relevant database at each state agency for learners taking courses offered by state agencies.

The KYVU recognizes that the proposed revision may entail changes in how institutions report data to the council's comprehensive database. However, the KYVU believes that the proposed change will result in more consistent and accurate statistics for the KYVU. It is worth recalling that, at one level of abstraction, the KYVU has no students: all KYVU learners are primarily learners affiliated with an academic institution or with a program sponsored by a state agency. The learners the KYVU serves and reports are a proxy count so that the KYVU can measure its performance and be measured by the council, DLAC, the governor's office, and the legislature.

If the proposed definition is approved, the KYVU and the council will work closely with the colleges and universities on changes to reporting requirements. The KYVU presented the proposed definition to the campus-based distance education coordinators July 25, to institutional research staff August 9, by letter to the chief academic officers August 8, and to DLAC August 26. If approved, the proposed change would take effect July 1, 2003. The council staff plans to recommend new KYVU performance goals based on the proposed new definitions at the November 2002 council meeting.

Staff preparation by Daniel Rabuzzi